

# The Patch

## What is the Patch?

The patch is a thin piece of plastic that you wear for one week at a time to prevent pregnancy.

## How does it work?

The patch gives off the hormones estrogen and progestin, which stop your ovaries from releasing eggs and prevent you from getting pregnant.

The patch does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Always use a condom to help protect yourself from HIV and other STIs.

## What are the benefits of the patch?

- An effective form of birth control
- Rapidly reversible
- Many women will notice lighter periods and less cramping.
- Periods will be regular, or women can choose not to have periods.
- Tends to make acne and oily skin better
- Protects against a form of ovarian cancer and uterine cancer
- Convenient — changed once a week
- Safe for women with latex allergy

Tell all your health care providers about any medications you are taking, including the patch. A few medications can make the patch less effective in preventing pregnancy. There are other, more effective birth control methods that you may want to use.



## How effective is the patch?

*Perfect Use:* Less than 1% of women who correctly use the patch will get pregnant within a year.

*Typical Use:* About 9% of all women who use the patch will get pregnant within a year (Includes women who use the patch incorrectly or inconsistently).

## When do I change my patch?

You will need to change your patch once a week for three weeks, and then go without the patch for a week. You will need to change the patch on the same day every week, so if you start the patch on a Tuesday, Tuesdays will always be your “patch change day.”

## What about my weight and the patch?

The patch is not as effective in preventing pregnancy for women who weigh more than 198 pounds. There are more effective methods available for these women. Talk to your health care provider about your options.

## Where can I put the patch?

Put the patch on an area of clean, dry skin on your stomach, back, butt, or upper/outer arm. **DO NOT** place the patch on your breasts, areas where you will be using lotion, or on irritated or cut skin.

## Can I swim, shower and exercise with the patch?

Yes! The patch will stay on during these activities.

## When can I start having sex after starting the patch?

If the patch is started within 5 days of the start of a normal period, the patch will protect you right away from pregnancy. Otherwise, use a back-up birth control method, such as a condom, or don't have sexual intercourse for 7 days after starting the patch.

## Will I have side effects from the patch?

Some women who use the patch have side effects that can include nausea and vomiting, sore breasts, headaches, spotting or irregular bleeding, and moodiness.

These side effects do not mean that the patch is dangerous or is not working. They will generally go away 2 to 3 months after starting the patch. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns about side effects with the patch.

## What if the patch comes loose or falls off?

Patch falls off (detached) or late applying a patch	What to do
<p>You are late applying a patch or your patch detached <b>less than 48 hours</b> since a patch should have been applied or reattached:</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply a new patch as soon as possible.</li> <li>• If the patch detached less than 24 hours since you applied the patch, try to reapply the patch or replace it with a new patch.</li> <li>• Keep the same patch change day.</li> <li>• No back-up birth control method is needed.</li> <li>• Emergency contraception is not usually needed but is available especially if you were late in applying a new patch or the patch was detached earlier in this cycle or in the previous cycle.</li> </ul>
<p>You are late applying a patch or the patch was detached <b>48 hours or more</b> since a patch should have been applied or reattached and it's the <b>1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> patch week</b>:</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply a new patch as soon as possible.</li> <li>• Keep the same patch change day.</li> <li>• Use back-up birth control methods, such as condoms, or don't have sex until the patch has been on for 7 days in a row</li> <li>• Emergency contraception should be considered and is available if needed.</li> </ul>
<p>If you are in the <b>3<sup>rd</sup> week</b> of your patch cycle and you are late applying a patch or the patch has been detached <b>for 48 hours or more</b> since it should have been applied:</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply a new patch as soon as possible.</li> <li>• Omit the hormone-free week by finishing the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of patch use and starting a new patch right away.</li> <li>• Keep the same patch change day.</li> <li>• Use back-up birth control methods, such as condoms, or don't have sex until the patch has been on for 7 days in a row.</li> <li>• If unable to start a new patch right away, use a back-up method such as condoms or don't have sex until a new patch has been worn for 7 days in a row</li> <li>• Emergency contraception should be considered and is available if needed.</li> </ul>

### Warning Signs:

Call your clinic immediately if you:

- Think you may be pregnant
- Have heavy or prolonged vaginal bleeding

Or experience:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Severe headache
- Severe pain or numbness in your arm or leg
- New problems with your eyesight, like blurry vision or seeing spots
- Severe abdominal pain

These can be signs of rare but serious, life-threatening health problems, such as heart attack, stroke, or blood clots in the veins or lungs, and require the care of a medical provider.